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A man's gift will make room for him (Proverbs 18:16)

Probably the next time you come, I might be riding a bigger car, enjoying life more than you are seeing now. I think the fundamental issue is that your income should be legitimate. A man's gift will make room for him ... If you use your gifts and use it well, you are not supposed to be poor. (Samuel Adu- Gyamfi, founder of Think Tank Intercessors Ministry, Kumasi)

Introduction

In the above quote, the founder of 'Think Tank Intercessors Ministry' (a charismatic church located in Kumasi, Ghana) and lecturer at the university, Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, makes a connection between using your (spiritual) gifts and being wealthy. He refers to Proverbs 18:16 to argue that if you have a gift and use it well, you will be seen and recognised by others and this includes receiving wealth.¹ Samuel Adu-Gyamfi went on to explain that he had been on the radio a few days earlier to 'discuss some religious issues'. A rich businessman called the radio programme and said he wanted to meet the person talking.

¹ See also Myles Munroe (late Bahamian Evangelical Christian evangelist who trained at the Oral Roberts University) on Proverbs 18:16: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/turning-point-zone/your-gift-will-make-room-for-you-by-dr-myles-munroe/249108294450> (Accessed 19 May 2015).

Samuel further explained:

‘He just came, saw me and gave me some money and told me to come to his office. I went to his office and we talked. He gave me money, but he was not a church member ... He gave me good money and it was exciting. I was not even preaching about money. He felt he was spiritually persuaded and physically impressed ... Interestingly he engaged me on more spiritual points of view and debated me on some spiritual positions he has against mine. The point I am trying to make is that a man’s gift will make room for him ... He calls and we talk for long periods because he has money. Most importantly, when he heard me, he could accept my position as a priest because what I shared matched up to what I claimed to be. It is not about laying on of hands or exorcising him of some demons. It is more of a spiritual persuasion and a kind of intellectual something’ (interview Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, 10 December 2014)

Through narrating his encounter with the rich businessman, Samuel explains why the money he received from the man is legitimate wealth. He received this money by making use of his spiritual gifts, in this case a spiritual and intellectual exchange, and this legitimated the wealth. Moreover, receiving the money was a sign of recognition of him as a man of God; his gift made room for him.

But not all wealth generated by religious figures and authorities like Samuel is seen as legitimate wealth. In Ghana the display of wealth of certain charismatic² pastors is a hot topic in public debate. One controversial issue is if the richness of a pastor is seen as being achieved through the selling of religious services such as prayer, holy water or anointing oil or if it is associated with the use of other spiritual forces mediated by fetish priests³. There seem to be a dividing line between on the one hand giving money to a pastor or a church (placing seeds)

² In this text I mainly use the term charismatic Christianity by which I refer to independent charismatic neo-Pentecostal churches, sometimes also referred to as neo-prophetism. I hence differentiate from the more classical and well-established Pentecostal churches (such as the Church of Pentecost and Assemblies of God in the Ghanaian context) and do also not include charismatic within the mainline churches. Most church leaders and founders I have talked with refer to themselves as within the charismatic sector.

³ *ɔkɔmfɔ*, pl. *akɔmfɔ*, priest or fetish priest, one who is possessed by powers of supernatural origin.

either as recognition of a blessing from God or as a way to achieve a blessing (harvesting) and on the other hand asking people to pay for a religious service. In the first case giving is seen as voluntary and non-obligatory and as involving a relationship between the giver and God. In the second case giving is a request in which man somehow interferes with or disturbs God's blessings.

The question of how and when the accumulation of wealth in Ghanaian charismatic churches is seen as legitimate is the focus of this paper. I discuss the amassment and use of wealth, how wealth becomes legitimate wealth and how this is related to religious ideas and the spiritual realm. I look into the ways in which wealth is talked about in church, among church members as well as in public debate.⁴

My intention is to understand how ideas and practices of wealth in charismatic churches resonate with other religious, social and historical ideas on wealth and how wealth is linked to religion and power. The point is that by taking a broad anthropological and historical approach to understanding wealth in charismatic Christianity we are able to expand discussions of the prosperity gospel to include questions of how different forms and moralities of wealth are distinguished and legitimized; questions that empirically transgress the field of charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity and relate to broader issues of the relationship between religion, wealth, redistribution and power.

These questions echo earlier writings on classifications of money, such as Parker Shipton's work on Luo distinctions between different kinds of money (good and evil/bitter). These distinctions were related to how money was achieved: 'How money was obtained determines how it is classed; and how it is classed determines how people think it should be used' (Shipton 1989: 9, see also Werthmann 2003 for a discussion of bitter money and gold in

⁴ The paper draws on empirical material collected in Ghana during 2004, 2005 and 2014. Fieldwork consisted mainly of participation in church services, interviews and numerous informal conversations and correspondences with pastors, church members and friends. The main part of the fieldwork was conducted in Kumasi, but also in Accra, Sunyani and Techiman. The work was conducted in relation to my PhD dissertation (entitled *The Craft of Pastors in Ghana and Beyond*, Roskilde University 2008, which I am currently making into a book). The latter part of the fieldwork was done as part of a research programme based at Lund University entitled 'Looking for Wholeness in an Enchanted World: Healing, Prosperity and Ritual Action in African Charismatic/Pentecostal churches'.

Burkina Faso). These distinctions could be and were often between ‘modern money’ used for individual consumption and pre-colonial currencies that were thought of as communal wealth or wealth for redistribution. In Asante there is also a historic tension between accumulating wealth for the individual or to the benefit of the community (McCaskie 1986, 1995). In pre-colonial Asante ‘big men’ (*abirempon*) were responsible for the maintenance and continuity of society and therefore had a responsibility to redistribute accumulated wealth. The Asante state imposed restrictions on the use of wealth, but there were also moral standards as to how wealth was to be redistributed. Wealth was a sign of worth and displaying wealth publically was the way in which the status and title of ‘big man’ was proved and approved.

In this paper I argue that present day charismatic pastors manoeuvre within this tension between accumulation for the individual or the community as well as within debates around the moral legitimacy of wealth. On the one hand, (some) pastors focus strongly on prosperity and economic success (as a sign of God’s blessing) in their preaching. On the other hand, they also draw attention to their role as providers and caretakers of the community, for instance by praying for the well-being of society, engaging in social development projects and contributing to their home communities.⁵ At the moral level they need to accommodate and relate to these tensions in order to be truthful mediators between the spiritual and the material world. At the same time, they are eager to show that their wealth is legitimate wealth by underscoring that is it given to them or their church freely.

By analysing the moralities around wealth in Ghanaian charismatic Christianity in a longer historical perspective, I wish to draw attention to and question that the logic of the prosperity gospel (giving money to God (as church offerings or tithes) will bring success in one’s life) is particular only to Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity and suggest that the mechanism reflects broader gift-giving practices in its classical sense. Moreover, in pre-colonial Asante the gods (*abosom*) were thought to be devoted to accumulation. McCaskie mentions a saying that goes ‘the *abosom* that is sharp [that is, acute in predicting events and fulfilling desires] is the

⁵ Gyekye notes that the Akan concept of ‘good’ is basically concerned with the welfare and the well-being of the community (1987: 132), which explains why the tension between accumulation to oneself or the community is central in Asante morality. He moreover argues, and this is important with regard to the public critique of charismatic pastors, that “Akan social thought attempts to establish a delicate balance between the concepts of communality and individuality”, which implies that the two poles are not excluding one another (1987: 161).

one that has offerings vowed to it' (1995: 122). The priests serving the gods were the mediators between the spiritual realm and those consulting the gods and were as such mediators of strong powers. As McCaskie writes: 'That is the principal, indeed sovereign, reason why the Asante persisted in the interrogation of *akomfo* [priests] and the powers they represented and spoke for, while simultaneously mistrusting and fearing them' (1995: 123). There is therefore in Asante a historic link between the imperative to accumulate and religion.

In what follows I will discuss what kinds of wealth accumulated by charismatic pastors are perceived as legitimate and in accordance with Christian principles and what kinds of wealth that are on the other hand seen as un-Christian and often associated with demonic forces. This tension appeared to be very prominent when I was last in Kumasi, Ghana in December 2014, and was more debated than when I did fieldwork in 2004 and 2005. The tension was around whether a pastor's wealth was a blessing from God or whether it was achieved by selling religious services such as prayers, holy water or anointing oil, the latter seen as morally wrong. The issue was not so much whether it was acceptable that a pastor was rich, but rather how his or her wealth was achieved and used. These debates links questions of accumulation of wealth to the issue of power in the sense that being under the influence of the Holy Spirit while accumulating was a way of legitimizing one's wealth and at the same time a way to show and perform power. Some of the pastors who were accused of selling religious services were also accused of being under the influence and power of traditional priests and to use juju in their churches when performing healing and miracles.⁶

By focusing on some of the historic continuities when analysing wealth in charismatic Christianity I make the point that rather than mainly seeing the focus on prosperity in charismatic Christianity as an adaption of a global religious ideology, the focus on wealth can also be read as an expression of resistance to ideas of wealth introduced by missionary Christianity that separated religious virtues and the possession of wealth. In a way, charismatic Christianity and the prosperity gospel has re-permitted religious leaders to possess and

⁶ One example from Kumasi is the case of Pastor Frank Annor who accused Bishop Obinim of hiring him to bury human bones, snake and four red candles at the site of Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre in order to discredit the pastor of that church. It is reported that when Bishop Obimin denied knowing Pastor Frank Annor, the pastor put away his Bible and used schnapps and eggs to curse Bishop Obinim. See: <http://www.modernghana.com/news/251722/1/kumasi-pastors-in-juju-drama.html>. Accessed 19 May 2015.

accumulate wealth and through this earlier debates about legitimate and illegitimate wealth return. Moreover, the idea that wealth becomes immoral if it is achieved through selling religious services also points to some analytical problems in understanding religious offerings or gifts as investments in a purely economic or instrumental sense (refs.). The prosperity gospel, as it is understood and practiced in Kumasi, is a local interpretation of a more global religious ideology, and it is through this work of interpretation that prosperity in the charismatic sense has resonance in an Asante context.

Prosperity gospel

The prosperity gospel has been a prominent line of analysis in scholarship on Pentecostalism and charismatic Christianity in Africa. One of the basic ideas of the prosperity gospel is described by the ‘sowing and reaping’ metaphor in which church members are encouraged to sow tithes and offerings in church in order to reap a harvest of wealth and success. The prosperity gospel (or faith gospel) is, in brief, about seeing wealth and richness as a sign of God’s blessings (Bonsu and Belk 2010, Gifford 2001: 62-65, Meyer 1998c, Wariboko 2012). In Gifford’s words: “A believer has a right to the blessings of health and wealth won by Christ, and he or she can obtain these blessings merely by a positive confession of faith” (Gifford 1998: 39).⁷ A common way of explaining the appeal of the charismatic churches is that people come to church to seek success in life—such as in business, marriage, education, to get a visa and travel—and to achieve social mobility (Ukah 2005). The focus on success and prosperity is, in other words, understood as making charismatic churches attractive and as being in consonance with many people’s aspirations for a modern life style and material wealth (Meyer 1998c: 762).

The Christian principle of giving and receiving (sowing and reaping) is referred to again and again by pastors as the underlying rationale behind receiving the blessings of God: the more one gives in church the more one receives from God.⁸ Pastors teach church members how to learn to give freely and spontaneously. This principle builds on the unique relation between man and God (you give as an individual person and God gives back to you as an individual). All that members give in church is seen as something they give to God, which means that

⁷ The origins of the faith gospel are ascribed to American evangelists such as Kenneth Copeland, Oral Roberts and T. S. Osborn (Gifford 2001: 62-63) (see also Lindhardt 2009: 42).

⁸ On the theological background of this principle see Asamoah-Gyadu (2005a).

giving to the church or the pastor is the same as giving to God. This relation is what Ukah terms “an economic transaction between believers and God” (2005: 261) mediated by the religious leadership. However, it is worth noticing that receiving the blessings of God (although this might be imaginary) would not necessarily come through the church or the pastor, so the relations of exchange are not necessarily reciprocal in a direct sense. Nevertheless, the language used to explain the principles of giving and receiving is often an ‘economic’ language underpinned by assumptions of calculated return. Giving is talked about as an investment and receiving as the fruits one harvests from that investment.

One of the main interests in discussions on Pentecostalism and the prosperity gospel has been to explain the conjuncture between the rise of millennial capitalism and a neo-liberal world order and the increasing occurrence of occult economies and the prosperity gospel. The Comaroffs for instance argue that the emergence of a new protestant ethic is a response to a new spirit of capitalism where spiritual rewards come instantly and take the form of material wealth (2003). This frame of explanation accentuates the irrational and the occult as responses to life conditions marked by lack, loss and disempowerment as well as to forces of global capitalism. It moreover emphasises religion and religious services as commodities and therefore promotes a market analogy (for instance seeing religion as a reflection of a market model and paying tithes or offerings as investments), as Lindhardt (2009) also points out. Moreover, as Haynes points out, much scholarship has emphasised accumulation in the prosperity gospel as being for individual consumption rather than for redistribution in the community (Haynes 2012: 133), which is linked to discussions of ‘making a complete break with the past’ and social rupture (Meyer 1998a).

Others have criticised this market oriented focus and have interpreted the prosperity gospel from the ‘inside’ and according to the religious ideas invoked in practices of giving and receiving (see for instance Coleman 2011). Premawardhana (2012), for instance, sees tithing and offerings as practices of substitution through which he indicates that ‘more important than the quantitative value of what passes between sacrificer and divinity, between giver and receiver, is the quality of the relationship to which the exchange binds the two parties’ (2012: 90). He puts particular focus on the experiences of people (the internal transformation of lived experience) and the existential imperative to sense oneself as an actor and hence places the analysis within existential anthropology (M. Jackson).

Although I find this analytical approach rewarding in that it helps to take focus away from the question of why the Pentecostal movement has been on the rise as well as the issue of the relationship between an economic rationale and religious practices, my aim here is to analyse debates about what is legitimate wealth and what makes wealth legitimate, rather than focusing on how it makes sense to give seen from the internal perspective. The accumulation of wealth within charismatic churches in Ghana is disputed, both publically, but also within the charismatic sector itself. In this I follow Lindhardt when he argues that ‘the Faith gospel provides ways of dealing with the moral and perceived dangerous aspects of wealth and accumulation’ (2009: 42). Here the cultural perceptions of wealth are the centre of the analysis rather than the prosperity gospel as such (and which I in itself do not find fruitful to use as an analytical perspective). In the discussion that follows the focus is whether giving is voluntary (and wealth has been achieved by people giving with the heart) rather than as a payment for a religious service.

Ideas and rituals of wealth in charismatic Christianity in Asante

It is in relation to wealth, money and prosperity that charismatic pastors are criticised in public debate. They are accused of stealing from the poor when imposing tithing and encouraging members to contribute financially to the church. The criticism revolves in particular around the flamboyant appearance and lifestyle of some pastors, because of which they are perceived as collecting money mainly for their own personal consumption. In order to be seen as truthful and legitimate, pastors have to show publically not only that they are rich, but also that they share and distribute their wealth and that their wealth is blessings from God. The perceived immorality has to be overcome by showing that the money is redistributed and used for the well-being of the community. But they also seek to justify themselves through reformulating religious ideas around wealth. Pastors legitimate their wealth by ideologically showing that it is a sign of God’s blessing and hence provide a moral acceptance of it. So they both relate to Asante experience by showing that they care for the community and do not steal from the poor, which in an Asante context is problematic (McCaskie 2008c: 448) and they also relate to a Christian frame of understanding that promoted an ascetic lifestyle and hence seek to re-legitimise the use and display of wealth.

I suggest that charismatic pastors' rhetoric and behaviour with regard to wealth can (also) be seen as a reaction to the mainline churches and the classical Pentecostal churches' stance towards accumulating, using and displaying wealth. Several people told me that with the emergence of the charismatic churches it had again become legitimate to gain and use wealth. In the mainline churches there was a much more ascetic (or classical protestant) view on wealth. Here abundant wealth and a flamboyant lifestyle were not in compliance with Christian values. These values were on the other hand characterised by 'a retreat from the world and an anti-material or 'holiness' stance' (Soothill 2007: 37). Within these churches piety was related to material asceticism (Bonsu and Belk 2010: 309).

One pastor explained how earlier on (he referred specifically to the 1980s and 1990s) being a Christian meant having a pious lifestyle, 'a lifestyle of living so simple and living a life associated with nothing, and the way you dress and talked became different from society'.⁹ It is interesting that he defines this style of life as being an exception and as 'different from society' because it indicates that it was in opposition to the more general focus on wealth and money in Asante that had been prominent since the early twentieth century. Moreover, he links the mainline churches view on wealth with ideas of money as 'the root of all evil' and continued 'So anything that brought you so much money, they thought will bring you to evil'. In the pastor's way of explaining this he touches upon and links the mainline churches' ideas of wealth and ideas of abundant wealth as associated with evil, which was also a topic in Asante with the rise of the anti-witchcraft cults concurrent with the boom in cocoa production and hence access to a new form of wealth, as discussed among others by Austin (2003).

With the growth of the charismatic movement this ideology was challenged. Wealth in its broadest sense was (again) something one could display publically and it was seen as a sign of God's blessing and not as sinful; it was made spiritually legitimate to accumulate wealth.¹⁰ The pastor referred to above points in particular to the problem that the mainline churches did not 'emphasise on the attitude by which one gets the money' and this criticism was backed up by other informants. Here we touch upon another central theme when discussing pastors' legitimacy, namely the relation between wealth and *nokware* (truthfulness). Wealth and richness

⁹ Interview with Edward Otu, Kumasi, 22 February 2005.

¹⁰ See Ukah (2003b, 2005) for a thorough analysis of how this ideological change has taken place within the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria.

is legitimate if it has been accumulated and used in a morally acceptable way, and it is moreover necessary to progress in life and to avoid poverty. The cultural criteria of wealth are still building on many of the same symbols prominent in colonial Asante such as big houses, cars, clothing, but also on relations to 'big' pastors abroad, and appearing in public space (on television or radio for instance).

The prosperity gospel becomes the ideological framing that is referred to when legitimising the accumulation and use of wealth. It is of particular significance that it is a religious frame of reference that is drawn upon. Referring to wealth as sign of God's blessing is a way for pastors to prove that wealth is acquired in a truthful way, but it is also contested and put into question by the more established religious elite.

Church members were not only asked by pastors to give money to God and they not only expected to get commodities in return. They were also asked to give their time and to give their loyalty. As one pastor instructed: We have to give "our life, our time, our talents and abilities, our possessions: monies, clothes, cars, houses".¹¹ Giving in church is understood broadly and this links up to a broad definition of wealth as not only money but also as 'wealth-in-people' (Guyer). Time and presence can be seen as something to give; in the same way as money and other commodities. If church members give their time by being present in the church, they at the same time contribute to making the pastor look wealthy and as someone who has a large flock and who has control over people. Along the same lines, Ukah refers to members of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria being asked to "increase their expenditure, time, conviction and commitment in the cause of the church" (2005: 258).

A young independent pastor (Francis) in Kumasi was a guest preacher in the Atonsu/Gyinyase branch of Family Chapel International. In his sermon he talked about giving and ended by encouraging church attendants to pledge cement bags to finalise the construction of the church. He said:

"Noah offered. What have you given to this church? Since we started this building, how much have you given? Noah gave an offering, and God was moved. God took away curse...Its time you spend time with God. Give time. Give money, give, give, give, give. Who gave food to the

¹¹ Evening service, Harvest Chapel International, head branch, 7 December 2004.

pastor at Christmas? 'The pastor's gift is to understand the principles of giving and receiving...You are not travelling because you have not sown financially. You have died spiritually because you haven't spent time with God...Give, give, give, give your time, money, *sika* [money], and resources. Be blessed and lifted up. He is about to favour you. Who wants to buy cement for the church? It's an opportunity to be blessed'.¹²

After the sermon people got up, stood in the front of the church and pledged how many cement bags they would give. The residing pastor and his wife were the first to rise up and they offered two bags of cement (which was double up from the week before where they had offered one bag). They were then prayed for by the pastor. The pastor prayed and laid his hand on everyone who had pledged cement bags while saying "break it; it's a financial break through". Around 20 bags of cement had been pledged. To my surprise my research assistant, who was a Catholic and had a critical attitude towards the charismatic churches, also stood up, pledged a bag of cement and received the pastor's blessing.

This event was not about a pastor collecting for individual consumption. Francis was not preaching in his own church, but was a guest preacher in the church of a friend.¹³ The incentive for this pastor to get people to give is not so much about him getting richer in a material sense, but rather to show that by invoking the word and the power of God he was able to make people give. By proving his ability to collect, he also shows that he is a powerful preacher, he can control people, and that is how he builds up a position as a powerful 'man of God'. Moreover, it is important to note that he collected money for finalising the construction of the church. This is to the benefit of the church community and also legitimises his call for offerings.

Clearly, money plays a significant role, both as a powerful symbol of wealth and as necessary to run a church. At the end of one service, the head pastor rose from his big chair at the side of the stage and threw a bunch of cedi notes at the musicians.¹⁴ This flashing of money and material wealth can both be interpreted as religious re-legitimation of possessing wealth and

¹² Sermon at Family Chapel International, Atonsu/Gyinyase branch, 20 February 2005.

¹³ Making special programmes where external pastors are invited to preach is a very common practice in the charismatic churches.

¹⁴ Family Chapel International, Sunday service, 21 August 2005. This is not unique to churches, but a common practice.

individual consumption (in contrast to the values of the mainline churches) and at the same time as the use of money to show recognition to specific people.

It is useful to link the focus on money and wealth to the longer historical trend of capitalisation and monetisation in Ghanaian society and more particularly in Asante, where cash was required for consumption (McCaskie 2000: 132-133), and at the same time recognise that control over people and over institutions also plays a role in the ways in which pastors build up and display wealth.

Accumulation and redistribution

With regard to giving in church it was, as already mentioned, often highlighted that giving was voluntary. One church member explained the difference between those who give easily and those who do not: 'Some are stingy and do not give easily. There is a saying that a good man leaves inheritance for future generations. You need a good heart in order to give. God loves a cheerful giver so when you are giving and it is not from the heart, it is better to stop. When you give, it has to come from within'. (Francis Yeboah, church member, 14 December 2014). In this quote he places the questions of voluntary or forced giving within the church members themselves, rather than as a question of pastor asking money for religious services. It relates to questions of truthfulness and how freely you give is a matter of how much you are of God.

A woman, who was a church member and treasurer in a different church in Kumasi also said in relation to giving freely: 'I cannot tell but if you know the word of God, you will not let the pastor force you to give but you would give freely from the heart.' (Rosemund, 9 December 2014). Again the question of whether giving is free or forced is a question of being with God and also having knowledge of the word of God. So having knowledge also permits people to give in the right way (freely and from the heart).

One pastor, who had been constructing a new church, explained how some church members had collected money to construct a house for him at the church site. He was at the time living in a rented apartment and he did not have the money to renew the rent period. He explained that some of the church members: 'decided to use part of the plot on which the church was

built to put up a house for me. They did so within about ten months. By the time, my rent expired completely, I was moving into the new house. They did it from their own heart with their own money. For one to decide to extort money, I think it is not right and it is not the godly way of doing God's business. When they realize they are benefitting from what God has given you, they would not hesitate to give willingly. It is reciprocal as stated by Apostle Paul.' (Seth Osei-Kuffuor, 8 December 2014).

There is a certain ambiguity to this quote in the sense that he on the one hand explains that the church members were giving from their hearts, but at the same time saying that it is when they realise that they will get something in return from God that they give freely. It puts the idea of giving freely in a different perspective, as it is when giving becomes reciprocal that the voluntariness arises.

The same pastor also criticises those who focus too much on getting big gifts from their members:

'Sometimes, it is just too much. Those people are the ones who are in for something; ride the best cars, have big houses etc. They therefore use all means possible to attain that. If you want to see them, you would have to join a queue and then pay consultation fee before seeing them. Some charge for deliverance. Here, you come and state your problem. We then pray for you and if there is anything you want to give, it is okay. If you do not have, we don't force you to pay anything. You give from your heart (*w'akoma*).

In this quote he emphasises that charging for religious services is not morally acceptable and again that giving should be from the heart (see also Scherz 2014 on 'having heart' in Uganda).

On the issue of when it is legitimate for a pastor to collect money in church, a pastor responded that if one is a genuine pastor, one should be more concerned with the well-

being of the church and less with one's own lifestyle and this entailed not asking too much from the church. This pastor also mentioned however, that it is acceptable to ask for church offerings ('sowing a seed in the house of God in order to reap it later') and she saw this as a necessary form of giving and added that 'if you prevent them from getting the blessing of the Lord concerning giving, that is not allowed' (Gloria, 3 December 2014). In this quote Gloria sees not allowing people to pay money in church as a way of preventing them from getting blessed and that would be problematic. Here the distinction again lies between giving and receiving God's blessing and making people give with the purpose of personal enrichment.

Selling religion and accusations of being fake

One controversial figure was Prophet Ebenezer Opambuor Adarkwa Yiadom (also known as 'Prophet One' or 'Asante Moses'), who is the leader and founder of Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre in Kumasi. According to some, his church is among the largest churches in Kumasi.¹⁵ Prophet Ebenezer was born in the early 1960s and grew up in a Zongo community in Kumasi.

His church is located in Ahenema Kokoben, a suburb of Kumasi, where he has bought a large piece of land, which he has named 'Island City'. Before reaching the church site one passes a row of small houses that are all under construction and which are meant to be used for hosting visitors. The prophet has his private house on the other side of the road; a big house with large red crosses made in tiles on the roof. The church is believed to have 20,000 members with branches in Accra, Cape-Coast and Sunyani, as well as one in Germany (Kuwornu-Adjaottor 2013). The church emphasizes healing and deliverance and assumes that "no one is in charge of his or her own life. There are spirits that either make or mar one's life, hence the need for supernatural power to overcome such evil spirits" (Kuwornu-Adjaottor 2013: 63).

Prophet Ebenezer has constructed a well at the church site from which he draws sacred water (*buramu nsuo*). It is believed that everything blessed by the prophet is sacred. On Wednesdays

¹⁵ His church can be characterised as being situated within the neo-Pentecostal /charismatic sector, but is by some also defined as being within the neo-prophetic movement (Kuwornu-Adjaottor 2013).

the church has a miracle service (running from 6 am to 2 pm). At this occasion people come to the church carrying large yellow plastic cans to get (buy?) holy water. At church services anointing oil can also be bought. This is one of the controversies around this prophet. Being thought of and talked about as a pastor who is selling holy water, anointing oil and charging money for prayers is questioning his credibility as a man of God.

He is a controversial figure, both because of his wealth, his public appearances, as well as because of how he accumulates wealth. He has also had public controversies with a renowned traditional priest in Kumasi and with Nigerian pastors in Ghana whom he has challenged in spiritual competitions.

One woman, church member in another charismatic church, said the following about this prophet: 'I heard that before you go for counselling at Ebenezer's place, you have to pay 500 Ghanaian cedis. I do not believe in that ... For those pastors they have their own ways of getting wealth from the church members. For some rich pastors like Archbishop Duncan Williams, you can see that their wealth is from God. They started from scratch and God has raised them to that level. For these fake ones, they get rich overnight. God is a miracle worker, not a sorcerer ... The genuine men of God struggle before they become successful. The fake ones become successful at once without struggle. They go for charms to be able to look into the future and past to impress people. ' (Interview Abigail xx Dec 2014).

This quote touches upon the issue of getting rich too quickly (similar to Lindhard's discussion of fast money or Shipton's discussion of bitter money). The money is fast and it is achieved by using witchcraft, which makes it illegitimate. This brings us back to the starting quote of the paper, 'A man's gift will make room for him' (Proverbs 18:16), which implies that if a pastor has and uses a gift he will receive wealth in recognition and this is seen as legitimate wealth. But if wealth is achieved through selling religious services or drawing on the power of fetish priests it is illegitimate. Similarly, fake pastors are associated with greed and womanizing not only in contemporary charismatic Christianity, but this issues were also featuring in church disputes earlier (1980s as well as earlier). There is an interesting parallel here to the idiom of

‘eating’, which in some contexts (eg Kenya) involves both money and sex, but I haven’t been able to explore that any further). (see also Wariboko 2012 on illegitimate wealth)

A ‘big’ pastor in Kumasi, Victor Osei, also talked about the issue of greed or ‘when prosperity gets into the head of people’, talking about it more as a psychological danger than something associated with evil forces or fakery: ‘Somebody can be a pastor truly called of God, but truly misled and so would veer off course. Sometimes, prosperity gets into the head of people. When people begin to do well in ministry, it has its effects. However, if you allow privileges to dictate to you then you begin to think highly of yourself. In spite of all wealth, one must remain simple and humble. When you do that it helps you’. (Victor Dec 2014)

Wealth and power

The above distinction also reflects a distinction in different sources of power. It is believed that there are two basic sources of power: ‘There is power from God and power from the Devil.’ (Daniel). Pastors take power (*gye tumi*) either from fetish priests, marine spirits, and different lower order gods. This form of power is difficult to leave, once one has taken it. It is said that in particular one fetish priest (Kwaku Bonsam) is the one who gives several pastors power to work with. Pastor Daniel explains that genuine pastors take power from the Holy Spirit, as their source of power, but the power of the Holy Spirit can leave: **‘It is very easy for the Holy Spirit to leave you and it is very easy for it to come back’**, but one’s spiritual gifts can remain. This indicates that pastors have to work constantly on their spiritual maturity in order to retain the power of the Holy Spirit.

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